(c) whether Government would consider deploying local forces to guard the LoC in Kargil area?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) There has been a good response to the rally held at Srinagar for recruitment for the Territorial Army for the 'Home & Hearth' Battalion. The exact number of Kashmiri Pandits cannot be ascertained.

(c) The troops of Ladakh Scouts, a regular infantry regiment of the Indian Army, are already deployed in guarding the Line of Control.

Safety performance of IAF

1687. SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian Air Force is seeking international cooperation to improve its safety performance;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the IAF was in a critical situation because of low fleet serviceability; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) The Indian Air Force (IAF) regularly interacts with the Air Forces of other countries for mutual benefit through sharing of information on flight safety and associated matters. This is an ongoing process.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Smuggling through coastline of India

1688. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of a recent admission by Indian Navy Cheif in a recent news report that incidents of piracy, terrorism and smuggling of illegal goods are happening through coastline of India, and that such instances are difficult to detect;

(b) if so, whether Government propose any action to curtail or stop piracy and smuggling through its coastline;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (d) The Government is not aware of any such admission having been made recently by the Chief of the Naval Staff. The Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard undertake surveillance and patrolling in coordination with other Government agencies like the Customs and the State police to check piracy, smuggling, illegal immigration and illegal fishing in Indian territorial waters. A scheme has also been formulated for patrolling in the sea close to the coast. The scheme envisages setting up of new coastal police stations and to strengthen the existing coastal police stations in the coastal States and Union Territories. This will supplement the efforts of the Indian Navy and the Coast Guard.

Purchase of Submarines

1689. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have entered into agreement with France for purchase of Submarines for the Indian Navy;

(b) if so, the details thereof indicating whether it is outright bilateral agreement or culmination of a competitive bidding process;

(c) if competitive bidding process, details of parties, nature of their respective bids and reasons for their elimination;

(d) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(e) the details of involvement of agents, if any, in the 'pre' and/or 'post' agreement proceeding in India and overseas?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (e) Three contracts were signed for the indigenous construction of six French scorpene class submarines at Mazagon Dock Limited (MDL), Mumbai on 6th October, 2005. The contracts were signed with